

# The Christian News-Letter

Edited by  
J. H. OLDHAM

December 29th, 1943

**D**EAR MEMBER,

The Archbishop of Canterbury has written the Supplement accompanying this letter in response to a request that he would take the initiative in trying to discover to what extent there exists a real and effective common Christian mind about the fundamental decisions which should govern the attitude and action of Christians in the secular world.

Please note exactly what the last sentence says. Unless you get this clear you are likely to miss entirely the point of the Supplement.

The significance of this Supplement does not lie chiefly in the fact that the weight of its contents and the authority of the writer give it unusual distinction. It is a different *kind* of document, and has a different purpose, from the ordinary Supplement. What is of primary interest in this case is not simply that the Archbishop says these things, but that in saying them he believes, after testing the matter, that he is expressing an "observable convergence" among those who have given serious thought to the subject. Drafts of the paper were at various stages submitted to, and discussed with, persons representing widely different Christian traditions. These discussions seemed to show that the common ground is greater than is commonly recognized, and the Supplement attempts to indicate what that common ground is.

If this basic agreement really exists about the fundamental choices to which Christians are committed, in sharp opposition to some of the dominant tendencies of our time, that fact may far outweigh in importance the differences which separate Christians about other matters. One of the greatest services that can be rendered to the Christian cause to-day may be to make this agreement stand out in bold relief so that it consciously controls and guides Christian thought and finds such vigorous expression in action that it becomes patent to all. If it were to permeate the consciousness of Christians, it would revivify all Christian activity by giving it a new common direction.

The Supplement is meant to help us to find the answer to three vital questions. You will judge it differently according to the importance you attach to these three questions.

The first is whether there is in fact a body of common Christian conviction about what Christians stand for in the secular world. The Supplement maintains that such agreement already exists, at any rate in germ. But the consultation has not thus far been wide enough for a final conclusion; the paper is published to test the matter further. We propose to follow it up in the Christian News-Letter. Where we

find real divergence on matters of importance we shall make room for an exchange of views in future Supplements. Further discussion will either disprove or confirm the fact of agreement.

The second question is whether the proposed decisions are of such a nature as to compel those who make them to take sides in the actual, living conflicts of to-day. Unless they do that they are of no practical importance. The Supplement assumes, and in some points shows, that they do make that kind of difference. The decisions which the Archbishop puts forward are not theoretic propositions to which we can give an easy intellectual assent and then forget about them and pass on to some new interest. They have to do with the basic faith by which men live. They are what are sometimes called "existential" decisions, in which not only the mind, but our whole being, is involved. The answer has to be given not merely in thought, but in life.

The third question is, perhaps, the real crux. Are the proposed decisions significant and definite enough, sufficiently concrete and practical, to unite those who make them in a common loyalty, so that they become, in virtue of these commitments, a recognizable factor in public life and a force capable of influencing the course of history? Is it possible, that is to say, to find a real, living and practically effective bond of union not in a common programme but in a common *faith*?

The affirmations which the Archbishop proposes are all perceptions of the true nature of reality. They are religious affirmations rather than ethical, relating not to what ought to be, but to what *is*. Those who make them may easily disagree about practical programmes, into which there inevitably enter judgments of facts about which opinions may diverge. The question, therefore, is whether the common religious beliefs are powerful and passionate enough to create a unity that transcends these differences.

## THE EUROPEAN SITUATION

We have received from a continental source the following grave account of the European situation. The writer of the letter, which was written in September, though it reached us only this month, is exceptionally well informed and has contacts with many different countries.

"There are few intelligent persons left in Europe who are not convinced that the end of totalitarianism is only a question of time. This applies just as much to Germany as it does to the occupied and neutral countries. National socialism is no longer considered as a force which shapes the future, it has ceased to count as an *ideological* factor or as a spiritual menace.

"But it remains a tremendous reality as a purely *physical* menace. The burning questions are: what the last stage of the war holds in store in the way of destruction and violence, and who and what will survive that most critical of all periods of the war. It seems already quite clear that just because national socialism knows that it is condemned, it will yet reveal its most demonic aspects. The coming months



may well become months of even greater horrors in all territories controlled by the Nazis.

"So it is comprehensible that the general sense of relief that the end of tyranny is approaching, is tempered by the fear that those men and those groups which have shown most courage in resisting and who are most needed for future reconstruction will to a large extent be 'liquidated' before the day of liberation. A poet in an occupied country has written a remarkable poem in which he describes the sentiments of a patriot who knows that the great moment of freedom is near, but that he himself will be shot before that hour arrives. This is typical of the mood of many in Europe to-day. There is no uncertainty about the outcome, but there is uncertainty as to who and what will survive the crucial moment.

"Nothing is more important for the understanding of the Europe of to-day and of to-morrow than the right appraisal of the effects of totalitarian rule upon the peoples. These effects are extremely difficult to ascertain, for the very nature of totalitarianism implies that the real life of the peoples becomes almost wholly invisible. Propaganda and terrorism produce a thick layer of official conformity which covers up the true currents of conviction and opinion. No one, not even the secret police, and perhaps those least of all, can have more than a vague and inadequate impression of all that lives behind the façade. On the other hand, the future depends on our conception of these underlying realities. We must have at least a working hypothesis on the basis of the indications which are available.

"What are these indications? Totalitarianism appears first of all as a great *destructive* force. It destroys not only the forces which resist openly, but also those which, though not resisting openly, continue to lead their own life. Thus it has not merely attempted to break the resistance of political parties, of intellectual forces, of the confessing Churches, but it has tried to do away with any autonomous life outside its own orbit, e.g. universities and professional groups. Its purpose in doing so is to make any alternative solution impossible and thus to make its own system indispensable and final.

"In doing this totalitarianism (which pretended to fill a political, social and spiritual vacuum) has in fact created a *vacuum* such as has never been seen before. Individuals cease to think and to react in a personal manner; self-governing responsible groups cease to function; living traditions die; there is no other life except the artificial life imposed from above. All the inner conditions are fulfilled of mass-life, that is of irresponsible, impersonal, uprooted existence without creative-ness and responsibility.

"There is then a vacuum of frightening proportions. It is in the last resort a religious vacuum. The masses despair for lack of a real substantial faith which holds on to the invisible realities. But there is one hopeful thing about a vacuum, namely, that it demands to be filled.

"The full effects of totalitarianism have only now come to make themselves felt, since total warfare creates a situation in which the whole process of destruction and uprooting is accelerated in an extra-

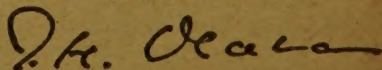
ordinary degree. Total war means that the outward conditions of life become such that most of the last remaining strongholds of free, healthy life, which exist in their own right and not merely as a product of the will of the state, are also destroyed. Totalitarianism had already made an onslaught on the family, but it is only through the process of mass-mobilization for the army and the labour front, through evacuation and deportation that the menace to family-life becomes truly mortal. Similarly, through the merciless liquidation for the sake of the total war-effort of all professions, in which men retained a certain amount of autonomy, practically all classes become proletarian.

"It must be added that the wholesale bombardments which involve the complete blotting out of whole cities have the same effect. Men and women who had still a home and a job to defend, have suddenly become people who have nothing to lose and are thus thrown into the mass of uprooted creatures who are merely the passive playthings of forces which they do not comprehend. At the same time these bombardments create the impression that the whole world has gone totalitarian. It is believed that no country recognizes any longer the limits of consideration for human life and of moral standards. It seems that there is nothing left except the war of all against all.

"Thus total warfare achieves the work of destruction begun by totalitarianism. The result is a general deadening of the sense of responsibility and of purpose. Life becomes just a matter of survival. Everything else becomes indifferent. Any system of government will do as long as it gives bread and security. Moral standards belong to the past world of tranquillity and organic relationships. Human life is very cheap, and if one finds that the disappearance of this or that person is necessary for one's safety or prosperity, that person will have to disappear."

This disquieting picture is followed by an examination of the elements which still have some vitality and contain promise for the future. Everything in the writer's view hinges on the lead given by the Western powers and on their ability to rekindle hope. But what he says on these subjects must be kept for a later News-Letter.

Yours sincerely,



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## WHAT CHRISTIANS STAND FOR IN THE SECULAR WORLD

BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

The distinction between the tasks of Church and of society, of churchmen and citizens, is seldom clearly drawn ; and the result is confusion and impotence. Either Christians try to act as churchmen in the world, only to find that the world refuses to be ordered on the principles proper to the Church ; or else they look out for the secular policy most congenial to their Christian outlook, only to find that their Christianity is a dispensable adjunct of no practical importance.

Church and State are different, though they may comprise the same people ; and each has its own appropriate sphere and method. Churchman and citizen are words with a different connotation even when they denote the same person ; and that person, the individual Christian, has to exercise both of these different functions. As long as he acts quite unreflectively he is likely to maintain the distinction and the appropriate balance fairly well, though he is also likely as a citizen to be excessively swayed by currents of purely secular thought and feeling. Moreover, it is almost impossible in these days to retain that naïve spontaneity. Reflection or its fruits are thrust upon us, and when once that process has started it must be carried through. It is half-baked reflection which is most perilous.

In the nineteenth century men still assumed a Law of God as universally supreme. In this country, at any rate, it was widely believed that God, whose nature was revealed in the Gospel and proclaimed by the Church, was also the orderer of the world and of life ; in only a few quarters was the alienation of the actual order from any subjection to the God and Father of Jesus Christ perceived or stated. The Church was, therefore, free to concentrate its main energies on its distinctive task of proclaiming the Gospel of redemption, without any sense of incongruity with the ordering of life in the world outside. Theologians could undertake the task of showing that Christianity enables us to "make sense" of the world with the meaning "show that it is sense." And those of us who were trained under those influences went on talking like that ; I was still talking like that when Hitler became Chancellor of the German Reich.

All that seems remote to-day. We must still claim that Christianity enables us to "make sense" of the world, not meaning that we can show that it is sense, but with the more literal and radical meaning of making into sense what, till it is transformed, is largely nonsense—a disordered chaos waiting to be reduced to order as the Spirit of God gives it shape. Our problem is to envisage the task of the Church in a largely alien world. Some would have us go back to the example of the primitive Church or of the contemporary Church entering on an evangelistic enterprise in a heathen country; this means the abandonment of all effort to influence the ordering of life in the secular world and concentration of all effort upon what is, no doubt, the primary task of the Church, the preaching of the Gospel and the maintenance among converts of a manner of life conformed to the Gospel. They advocate a spiritual return to the catacombs in the hope that the Church may there build up its strength till, having kept the shield of faith intact and the sword of the Spirit sharp, it may come forth to a new conquest of a world which has meanwhile returned to a new dark age.

But this is a shirking of responsibility. The Church must never of its own free will withdraw from the conflict. If it is driven to the catacombs it will accept its destiny and set itself there to maintain and to deepen its faith. But it cannot abandon its task of guiding society so far as society consents to be guided. It has a special illumination which it is called to bring to bear on the whole range of human relationships, and if, for lack of this, civilization founders, the Church will have failed in its duty to men and to its Lord.

But if so, it must be active in two distinct ways. It must at all costs maintain its own spiritual life, the fellowship which this life creates, and the proclamation of the Gospel in all its fulness, wherein this life expresses itself. Here it must insist on all those truths from which its distinctive quality is derived—that God is Creator and man with the world His creature; that man has usurped the place of God in an endeavour to order his own life after his own will; that in the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ God has Himself taken action for the redemption of mankind; that in the Holy Spirit given by the Father through the Son to those who respond to the Gospel, power is offered for a life of obedience to God which is otherwise impossible for men; that those who are thus empowered by the Spirit are a fellowship of the Spirit or household of the Lord fitly called the Church; that in that Church are appointed means whereby men may receive and perpetually renew their union with their Lord and with one another in Him, and so increase in the Holy Spirit. All this must be maintained and proclaimed. And unless the Church is firm in its witness



to its own faith, it will have no standing-ground from which to address the world.

But standing firm upon its own ground, it can and must address the world. By what convictions constantly in mind will Christians called to such a task direct their actions ?

## BASIC DECISIONS

There is in fact more widespread agreement than is generally supposed with regard to these basic convictions. I do not mean that they are universally accepted among Christians ; there are currents of Christian thought in all denominations which are directly opposed to some of them ; and many devout Christians have as yet not turned their attention in this direction at all. But among Christians who have seriously and thoughtfully faced the historical situation with which we are dealing there is, as I have proved by testing, an observable convergence which may be presented in five affirmations ; but as these are acts of faith, resting on a deliberate choice and involving a specific determination of the will, I speak of them rather as Decisions.

### 1. FOR GOD WHO HAS SPOKEN

A vague theism is futile. The cutting edge of faith is due to its definiteness. The kind of deity established (if any is at all) by the various "proofs"—ontological, cosmological and the like—is completely insufficient ; it is usually little else than the rationality of the world presupposed in all argument about the world. The Christian has made a decision for God who has spoken—in nature, in history, in prophets, in Christ.

It follows that the value of man and the meaning of history is to be found in the nature and character of God, who has thus made Himself known. The value of a man is not what he is in and for himself—humanism ; not what he is for society—fascism and communism ; but what he is worth to God. This is the principle of Christian equality ; the supreme importance of every man is that he is the brother for whom Christ died. This is compatible with many forms of social differentiation and subdivision. It is not compatible with any scheme which subjects a man's personality to another man or to any group of men such as the government or administrators of the State.

The purpose of God is the governing reality of history. Progress is approximation to conformity with it and fulfilment of it ; deviation from it is retrogression. The nature of God is a righteousness which is perfect in love ; His purpose, therefore, is the establishment of justice in all relationships of life—personal, social, economic, cultural, political, international. Many "humanists" share that

aim, and Christians may well co-operate with them in practical policies from time to time. But a "decision for God" involves a sharp separation in thought, and, therefore, in the long run in practice, from many dominant tendencies of our time which seek the whole fulfilment of man's life in his earthly existence.

God has given to man freedom to decide for Him or against Him. This freedom is fundamental, for without it there could be only automatic obedience, not the obedience of freely offered loyalty. God always respects this freedom to the uttermost; therefore, freedom is fundamental to Christian civilization.

But though man is free to rebel against God, and can indeed do marvels through science and human wisdom in controlling his own destiny, yet he cannot escape the sovereignty of God. To deviate from the course of God's purpose is to incur disaster sooner or later—and sooner rather than later in so far as the deviation is great. The disaster ensues by "natural laws" as scientists use that phrase—that is by the causal processes inherent in the natural order. But these laws are part of God's creation, and the disasters which they bring are His judgments.

Yet because man has so great a power to shape his own destiny he is responsible for using this. Belief in God is used by many Christians as a means of escape from the hard challenge of life; they seek to evade the responsibility of decision by throwing it upon God, who has Himself laid it upon them. Faith in God should be not a substitute for scientific study, but a stimulus to it, for our intellectual faculties are God's gift to us. Consequently a decision for "God who has spoken" involves commitment to the heroic, intellectual and practical task of giving to spiritual faith a living content over against the immensely effective this-worldliness of Marxism and secular humanism, while absorbing the elements of truth which these movements have often perceived more clearly and emphasized more strongly than Christians in recent times have done.

## 2. FOR NEIGHBOUR

As the first great commandment is that we love God with all our being, so the second is that we love our neighbour as ourselves. Here we are not concerned with that duty, but with the fact that underlies it whether we do our duty or not—not with what ought to be, but with what *is*. This is that we stand before God—that is, in ultimate reality—as bound to one another in a complete equality in His family. Personality is inherently social; only in social groupings can it mature, or indeed fully exist. These groupings must be small enough to enable each individual to feel (not only to think) that he can influence the quality and activity of the group, so that he is responsible for it, and also that it needs his contribution,



so that he is responsible to it. He must feel that he belongs to it and that it belongs to him.

It is characteristic of much democratic thought that it seeks to eliminate or to depreciate all associations intermediate between the individual and the State. These, as the foci of local or other departmental loyalties, are nurseries of tradition and, therefore, obnoxious in the eyes of some prophets of progress. But it is in and through them that the individual exercises responsible choice or, in other words, is effectively free. The State is too large; the individual feels impotent and unimportant over against it. In his local, or functional, or cultural association he may count for something in the State, so that through his association he may influence the State itself, as alone he can scarcely do.

Thus the limitless individualism of revolutionary thought, which aims at setting the individual on his own feet that he may, with his fellows, direct the State, defeats its own object and becomes the fount of totalitarianism. If we are to save freedom we must proceed, as Maritain urges, from democracy of the individual to democracy of the person, and recollect that personality achieves itself in the lesser groupings within the State—in the family, the school, the guild, the trade union, the village, the city, the county. These are no enemies of the State, and that State will in fact be stable which deliberately fosters these lesser objects of loyalty as contributors to its own wealth of tradition and inheritance.

Christianity has always favoured these lesser units. The Catholic Church itself is composed of dioceses, in each of which the structure of the Church is complete, representing the family of God gathered about the Bishop as its Father in God. And the civilization which the Church most deeply influenced was characterized by an almost bewildering efflorescence of local and functional guilds of every sort.

The revolutionary and mechanistic type of thought finds its classical and fontal expression in Descartes' disastrous deliverance, *Cogito, ergo sum*. Thus the individual self-consciousness became central. Each man looks out on a world which he sees essentially as related to himself. (This is the very quality of original sin, and it seems a pity to take it as the constitutive principle of our philosophy). He sets himself to explore this world that he may understand and increasingly control it. In the world he finds a great variety of "things." He studies these in his sciences of physics, chemistry, and biology, according to their observable characteristics. Among the "things" are some which require a further complication of his method of study, giving rise to psychology. But though he is now allowing for instincts, emotions, sentiments, purposes and similar factors, his attitude is the same as toward "things" which lacked these qualities. He organizes these psychological "things" in

ways calculated to extract from them the result he desires. He may, for example, as an industrial manager, introduce welfare work because he can in that way increase output. He might even, in an ultimate blasphemy, supply his troops with chaplains with no other object except to keep up military morale.

Now in all this he is treating persons as things. His relation to them is an "I—it" relation, not an "I—Thou" relation. This latter he only reaches so far as he loves or hates, and only in this relation does he treat persons as they really are. He may do very much what the enlightened man of purely "scientific" outlook does : he provides for the welfare of employees, if he is an employer, and is, of course, glad that it pays ; but that is not his motive : his motive is that they are human beings like himself. So he supplies what he would wish to have, and hopes and works for the time when they will not depend on him for what their welfare requires, but will be in a position to supply it to themselves. For he will prefer fellowship to domination.

It is in love and hate—the truly "personal" relationships—that we confront our neighbour as he is, a man like ourselves. Even hate has an insight denied to the egoist who coldly manipulates human beings as his pawns, and men resent it less. Most of us would rather be bullied than mechanically organized. But hate too is blind, partly from its own nature, partly because men hide from an enemy, as they do from a cynic, what is deepest and tenderest in their nature. Only love—the purpose of sheer goodwill intensified by sympathetic feeling—gives real insight and understanding.

We cannot command that love. Those who live with God become increasingly filled with it. But none of us can so rely on feeling it as safely to plan his life on the supposition of its emergence when required ; and when we consider secular society as a whole we know that we cannot count on it in volume adequate to the need. Indeed in the relationships of politics, commerce and industry it cannot find expression and can scarcely arise. To this we shall return. What we have to notice at present is that the primary relation between persons—by which in every generation multitudes of men and women have, consciously or unconsciously, guided their lives—has been relegated to a subordinate place by men's headlong eagerness to explore the secrets and exploit the resources of this wonderful universe. In the concentration on wealth we have tended to overlook the more fundamental and more difficult problems of the adjustment of our personal relations to one another.

It is a question whether it was primarily a false understanding of reality that gave free rein to men's egoisms and ambitions ; or whether their inherent selfishness inclined them to misread the true nature of things. To whichever cause we assign the greater



weight, men's self-centred aims and a false philosophy have co-operated to bring about a profound misunderstanding of the meaning of human life and to create the state of things which we see to-day.

Science, which has been perhaps the chief influence in giving its distinctive cast and colour to the modern consciousness, is essentially an expression of the individualistic approach. As scientist, the individual stands over against the world, measuring, weighing, experimenting, judging, deciding. The gains which have resulted from this approach and activity are incalculable. We can to-day only regret the timidity which led Christians in the past to oppose the advances of science. No enlightened Christian to-day would question the right of science to investigate everything that it is capable of investigating. It is certain that the problems of our complex society cannot be mastered without a continuous expansion of scientific knowledge, more particularly in the field of the social sciences.

It is none the less vital for the health of society that we should realize that, while man is meant to have dominion—and we cannot, therefore, be too thankful for the gift of science as an instrument, and are under an obligation to make the fullest use of it—the scientific attitude is only one approach to reality and not the most fundamental and important. As scientist the individual is monarch; he sits in the seat of judgment and asks what questions he will. But the situation is fundamentally changed when he encounters another person who, like himself, is monarch in relation to the world of things. In the encounter with another person or group he is no longer free to ask what questions he will and to order things according to his choice. Questions may be *addressed* to him from a source over which he has no control, and he has to *answer*. He is no longer sole judge, but is subject himself to judgment.

This profound difference between these two approaches to reality, which are uninterchangeable, is often hidden from us, because it is always possible to bring the relations between persons into the framework of the self-centred view. After the collision has taken place we can reflect upon it and fit it into our picture of the world. At any moment we can step out of the arena of conflict and take our place on the spectator's bench. So ingrained has the habit become that, without being aware of it, we continually have recourse to this form of escape. There is an immense deal that we can learn about persons with the aid of science; but so long as we study them medically, psychologically, sociologically, we never *meet* them. And it is precisely in meeting that real life consists.

It will need a strong and sustained effort to emancipate ourselves from the one-sidedness of the individualistic attitude and to

penetrate to the full meaning of the truth that the fundamental reality of life is the interplay, conflict and continuous adjustment of a multitude of different finite points of view, both of individuals and of groups.

Acknowledgment of this truth would create a wholly different spiritual and intellectual climate from that which has prevailed in recent centuries. Men would still strive, no doubt, to gratify their desires and seek their own aggrandisement ; they would not desist from the attempt to domineer over others. But these tendencies would be kept within bounds by a public opinion more aware than at present that in pursuing these courses men are doing violence both to their own nature and to the true nature of things. It would be recognized that men can live at peace with one another only if each individual and each group renounces the claim to have the final and decisive word. Society would have restored to it the sanity which comes from an understanding of human finitude.

A decision for sociality as the basic truth of human existence would create an outlook and temper so different from that which has been dominant in the modern era now drawing to its close as to create a new epoch in human history.

Between the decision for God and the decision for neighbour there is a most intimate connection. In the New Testament these are always intertwined. We should in all remembrance of God remember also our neighbour, and in all thought of our neighbour think also of God. Our highest act of worship is not a mystic "flight of the alone to the Alone," but a fellowship meal, a Holy Communion. We come before God as "Our Father" to whom all His other children have the same right of access ; the truth about God is, among other things, His universal Fatherhood. So too the truth about our neighbour is not only what he is to us nor what he is in himself, but above all what he is to God. His relationship to God is the ultimate fact about him, and if we are to think rightly about him or act rightly towards him, we must have that relationship full in view. We must cease to think and feel either in the vertical dimension wherein we are related to God, or in the horizontal dimension wherein we are related to our neighbours, and substitute the triangular relationship, God—Self—Neighbour, Neighbour—God—Self.

### 3. FOR MAN AS ROOTED IN NATURE

The most important thing about man is his relation to God and to other men. But his life has also been set in a natural order, which is God's creation. A fundamental duty which man owes to God is reverence for the world as God has made it. Failure to understand and acknowledge this is a principal cause of the present



ineffectiveness of the Christian witness in relation to the temporal order. It is one of the chief points at which a fundamental change of outlook is demanded from Christians. Our false outlook is most of all apparent in the exploitation of the physical world. As animals we are part of nature, dependent on it and inter-dependent with it. We must reverence its economy and co-operate with its processes. If we have dominion over it, that is as predominant partners, not as superior beings who are entitled merely to extract from it what gratifies our desires.

There are two major points at which failure to recognize that man's life is rooted in nature and natural associations leads to mistaken and vain attempts to solve the problem of society. The first grave error characteristic of our time is a too exclusive occupation with politics to the neglect of other equally important spheres of human life and activity. It is assumed that the ills from which society is suffering can be cured, if only we have the will and the right aims. It is forgotten that man is not a being ruled wholly by his reason and conscious aims. His life is inextricably intertwined with nature and with the natural associations of family and livelihood, tradition and culture. When the connection with these sources from which the individual life derives nourishment and strength is broken, the whole life of society becomes enfeebled.

Recognition of the vital importance of centres of human life and activity that underlie and precede the sphere of politics must not be made an excuse for evading the political decisions which have to be made in the near future. It is not a way of escape from political responsibility. Far-reaching decisions in the political sphere may be the only means of creating the conditions in which the non-political spheres can regain vitality and health; but the recovery of health in those spheres is in its turn an indispensable preliminary to political sanity and vigour.

The present plight of our society arises in large part from the break-down of these natural forms of association and of a cultural pattern formed to a great extent under Christian influences. New dogmas and assumptions about the nature of reality have taken the place of the old. New rituals of various kinds are giving shape to men's emotional life. The consequence is that while their aims still remain to a large extent Christian, their souls are moulded by alien influences. The real crisis of our time is thus not primarily a moral, but a cultural crisis. In so far as this is true, the remedy is not to be found in what the Church is at present principally doing—insisting on ideals—or in efforts to intensify the will to pursue them. The cure has to be sought in the quite different direction of seeking to re-establish a unity between men's ultimate beliefs and habits and their conscious aims.

Christians must free their minds from illusions and become aware of the impotence of moral advice and instruction when it is divorced from the social structures which by their perpetual suggestion form the soul. It must be remembered that when exhortation and suggestion are at variance, suggestion always wins. Christians must take their part in recreating a sound social and cultural life and thereby healing the modern divided consciousness, in which head and heart have become divorced and men's conscious purposes are no longer in harmony with the forces which give direction and tone to their emotional life.

But, secondly, if Christians are to have a substantial influence on the temporal order, it is not only necessary that they should have a clearer and deeper understanding of the positive, character-forming function of the non-political forms of human association, but their whole approach to social and political questions needs to be much more realistic than it has commonly been in the past. The Christian social witness must be radically dissociated from the idealism which assumes men to be so free spiritually that aims alone are decisive. There is need of a much clearer recognition of the part played in human behaviour by sub-conscious egoisms, interests, deceptions and determinisms imposed by man's place in nature and history, by his cultural patterns and by his sinfulness.

It has to be recognized that society is made up of competing centres of power, and that the separate existence of contending vitalities, and not only human sinfulness, make the elimination of power impossible. What has to be aimed at is such a distribution and balance of power that a measure of justice may be achieved even among those who are actuated in the main by egoistic and sinful impulses. It is a modest aim, but observance of political life leaves no doubt that this must be its primary concern.

If Christians are to act with effect in the temporal order, it is necessary, as was said at the beginning, to distinguish more clearly than is commonly done between the two distinct spheres of society and Church, or the different realms of Law and Gospel. We also need a clearer and deeper understanding of the difference between justice, human love and Christian charity. The last transcends both justice and human fellowship while it has contacts with each. Associations cannot love one another; a trade union cannot love an employers' federation, nor can one national State love another. The members of one may love the members of the other so far as opportunities of intercourse allow. That will help in negotiations; but it will not solve the problem of the relations between the two groups. Consequently, the relevance of Christianity in these spheres is quite different from what many Christians suppose it to be. Christian charity manifests itself in the temporal order as a



supra-natural discernment of, and adhesion to, *justice* in relation to the equilibrium of power. It is precisely fellowship or human love, with which too often Christian charity is mistakenly equated, that is *not* seriously relevant in that sphere. When the two are identified, it is just those who are most honest and realistic in their thinking and practice that are apt to be repelled from Christianity.

There is scarcely any more urgent task before the Church than that this whole complex of problems should be thought out afresh, and it is obviously a task which can be successfully undertaken only in the closest relation with the experience of those who are exposed to the daily pressures of the economic and political struggle. The third decision involves a commitment to a new realm in Christian thought and action ; the citizen and the churchman should remain distinct though the same individual should be both.

#### 4. FOR HISTORY

It is a question of vital importance whether history makes any fundamental difference to our understanding of reality. The Greek view was that it does not, and through the great thinkers of antiquity the Hellenic view still exercises a powerful influence over the modern mind.

In the Christian view, on the other hand, it is in history that the ultimate meaning of human existence is both revealed and actualized. If history is to have a meaning, there must be some central point at which that meaning is decisively disclosed. The Jews found the meaning of their history in the call of Abraham, the deliverance from Egypt, and the covenant with God following upon it. For Mohammedans the meaning of history has its centre in Mohammed's flight from Mecca. For Marxists the culminating meaning is found in the emergence of the proletariat. The Nazis vainly pinned their hopes to the coming of Hitler. For Christians the decisive meaning of history is given in Christ.

Christianity is thus essentially a continuing action in history determining the course of human development. The Christian understanding of history has much closer affinities with the Marxist view, in which all assertions about the nature of man are inseparably bound up with the dynamics of his historical existence, and with other dynamic views of history, which understand the world in terms of conflict, decision and fate, and regard history as belonging to the essence of existence, than with the interpretations of Christianity in terms of idealistic thought which were lately prevalent.

A decision for history confronts us with two urgent practical tasks. The first is to disabuse the minds of people of the notion, which is widespread, and infects to a large extent current Christian preach-

ing, that Christianity is in essence a system of morals, so that they have lost all understanding of the truth, so prominent in the New Testament, that to be a Christian is to share in a new movement of life, and to co-operate with new regenerating forces that have entered into history.

The second task is to restore hope to the world through a true understanding of the relation of the Kingdom of God to history, as a transcendent reality that is continually seeking, and partially achieving, embodiment in the activities and conflicts of the temporal order. Without this faith men can only seek escape from life in modes of thought which, pushed to their logical conclusion, deprive politics, and even the ethical struggle, of real significance, or succumb to a complete secularization of life in which all principles disintegrate in pure relativity, and opportunism is the only wisdom.

## 5. FOR THE GOSPEL AND THE CHURCH

This understanding brings us face to face with the decision whether or not we acknowledge Christ as the centre of history. He is for Christians the source and vindication of those perceptions of the true nature of reality which we have already considered. In the tasks of society Christians can and must co-operate with all those, Christians or non-Christians, who are pursuing aims that are in accord with the divinely intended purpose of man's temporal life. But Christians are constrained to believe that in the power of the Gospel of redemption and in the fellowship of the Church lies the chief hope of the restoration of the temporal order to health and sanity.

What none but utopians can hope for the secular world should be matter of actual experience in the Church. For the Church is the sphere where the redemptive act of God lifts men into the most intimate relation with Himself and through that with one another. When this is actually experienced the stream of redemptive power flows out from the Church through the lives of its members into the society which they influence. But only a Church firm in the faith set forth in outline earlier in this essay can give to its members the inspiration which they need for meeting the gigantic responsibilities of this age. Spiritual resources far beyond anything now in evidence will be needed. It may be that the greatness of the challenge will bring home to Christians how impotent they are in themselves, and so lead to that renewal which will consist in re-discovery of the sufficiency of God and manifestation of His power

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